



**By Colonel Jerry W. Gillean**  
**Commander, Alaska Air National Guard**

*(For his first issue of the Alaska View, as Air Guard Commander, Colonel Gillean desired to use his speech from the Change of Command ceremony for the benefit of those unable to attend.)*



General Lestenkof I want to thank you and Governor Knowles for giving me this opportunity.

In 1976 I faced a dilemma. I could either stay in the Air Force, an organization I loved very much, or I could stay in Alaska, the most beautiful place I have ever seen. I resolved that dilemma by joining the Alaska Air Guard—and having the best of both worlds. When I first came to the Guard I heard General Nick talk about the Guard family. He was absolutely right. I have seen you time and time again have fund raisers to help Guardsmen in need, take food to the family of ill members (sometimes for years), assist during times of grief and many many other acts of kindness too numerous to mention. I am proud of the compassion you have shown to each other and to your fellow citizens, and you have done this while tripling the size of the air guard. You have saved the lives of 370 of your fellow citizens, flown missions of mercy to remote outposts around the world, become the tanker task force for the Northern Pacific and have won the respect and admiration of your fellow citizens and the active and reserve establishments.

I absolutely believe the Air Guard is on the right course and I want to assure everyone that we will continue to be good partners and to maintain our steady course. We have an excellent relationship with the Army Guard and that must be continued and nurtured. I want to assure the Naval Militia that the individual who found you the space to hold your first Adjutant General muster and had a cake baked for the event,— still holds you in the same warm regards. I want all of you to know how lucky we are in this state to have a State Defense Force with the quality of people we have. They are an integral part of the State's Emergency Response. We also have a close relationship with the Department of Emergency Services and I want it to get even better.

I was honored to serve on our Joint Staff and I want you all to know that the Joint Staff continues to have my full support and I will assist you in any way that I can. You are the wave of the future.

One of the things that I am proudest of is the relationship that the Air Force and the Guard share here in Alaska. I want to assure you that I will do everything I can to continue to nourish that relationship. We all work for the people of this country and we serve their best interest when we work together. I wish to foster this relationship in all of our associations.

I want you to know what my goals are for the Air Guard. My first goal is to have all the women and men we need and to have them fully trained and combat ready and I want them treated with fairness and respect. I want our people to represent the ethnic and gender make up of the community. Recruiting is everyone's responsibility. I believe that the major difference between the active components and the Guard is that in the Guard we recruit our people out of our own communities. If we fail to recruit our mission will fail. There is nothing more important and I consider myself to be the head recruiter. Everyone in the state and not just the Guard needs to help if they want a strong National Guard.

My second goal is to seek out opportunities for the Guard to enhance our State and Federal mission and to use the training and skills our nation has paid for to give something back. We are citizens of the greatest country and the greatest state on earth and we owe them — they don't owe us. When we can assist we will, and I want us to be innovative in looking for ways to make it happen.

My third goal is to develop the future leaders of our organization. I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to people like Shirley Hartwell, she was the Master Sergeant who trained me when I was a Second Lieutenant. Men like Colonels Jack January, Charles Leaf and Ken Hayes who took time to motivate and mentor a headstrong young officer, and Guardsmen like Paul Lindemuth, Don Shantz, Brigadier Generals Ken Taylor and Dan Dennis who shared their advice and friendship. And last but not least my family. A Mother and Father who insisted on me getting an education and who gave me a set of values and the courage to stand up for my convictions, children who let me see life with a new sense of awe every day, and a wife who is very very supportive. Emma is a former Army Guard Captain I might add. Without the help of these people I would not have this opportunity today. I intend to repay you all by giving others the gifts you have given me.

And finally I want to share my vision. It is easy to remember but more difficult to achieve. My vision is that in the Alaska Air Guard we set the standards. We don't meet them, we set the standards. Just four words "we set the standards". I want us to be the people others try to emulate. I want each of you to be able say truthfully and with pride "we set the standards".

Let me quickly recap. My vision is **'we set the standards'** my goals are: **fully manned combat ready units; seek out opportunities to enhance our federal, state and community roles, and to develop our people for the future.**

And finally I want to wish Donna and General Ken well. They have been a terrific team. When you think of the Air Guard it should always be with well earned pride. You really are terrific. Thank you.